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SUBJECT: KOSOVO WEEKLY UPDATE: BELGRADE READIES ITSELF FOR NEXT STEPS

REF: BELGRADE 1050

¶11. (SBU) Summary: In the last week before the typical August lull, Serbian leaders made sure to line up all possible political unity on Kosovo through a parliamentary resolution in order to be ready for the international community's next steps on Kosovo status resolution. The Serbian Foreign Minister closed his active summer schedule with a visit to Washington. In his final interviews with Serbian press, the Ambassador unambiguously conveyed the USG's continued support for Kosovo's supervised independence. Meanwhile, Belgrade media and leaders are intently watching developments in the Contact Group which will define the structure of new status talks. End Summary.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

¶12. (U) Prime Minister Kostunica declared victory this week for Serbia's struggle to retain Kosovo as the U.S.-EU resolution on Kosovo was withdrawn at the UN and as Belgrade's parliament voted overwhelmingly on July 24 in support of a resolution reaffirming the GOS' Kosovo policy (reftel). President Tadic's DS party, along with the Radicals and Socialists also strongly supported the measure. At a July 26 event celebrating 15 years of his DSS party, the PM said that Serbia must focus "all of its effort" towards its Kosovo policy and that "the future of [Serbia] is on the line." He also said that a united Serbian position on Kosovo is "of utmost importance" and that such unity was shown by the passage of the parliamentary resolution.

¶13. (SBU) Serbian FM Jeremic left July 25 for a two-day visit to the U.S. to meet with the Secretary, National Security Advisor Hadley and Congressional leaders to discuss Kosovo. Jeremic stated that the priority in his visit would be to "reduce tensions" in bilateral relations and to reinforce U.S and Serbian shared interests on a large number of issues.

REPORTED USG STATEMENTS

¶14. (U) The Ambassador's gave his final press interviews with several media outlets and conveyed an unambiguous message that the U.S. was committed to partnership with Serbia as well as supervised independence for Kosovo. In a July 23 interview with Novi Sad's Gradajanski List, the Ambassador reiterated that Kosovo is a unique case and not a precedent that would cause a "domino effect" in other crisis areas around the world. He also said that keeping the Kosovo issue unresolved has prevented Serbia, Kosovo and the entire region from making progress. The Ambassador said directly that Kosovo would have supervised independence status by the end of the year and assessed that such an outcome, no matter how distressful, would lead to a stronger and more successful Serbia.

¶5. (U) In an interview with the daily Blic on July 25, the Ambassador said that a new resolution on Kosovo is not possible in the UNSC because Russia, on behalf of Serbia, despite many revised draft resolutions, blocked the process. He stressed that "status has to be resolved and if that would not be possible in the UNSC, we will find another way to reach a solution." Commenting on the new Belgrade-Pristina negotiations on Kosovo, the Ambassador expressed his belief that there will not be any change in the positions of both sides.

¶6. (U) In his final interview with B92, the Ambassador said that the new round of negotiations will mark the end of Kosovo's status settlement process. The Ambassador noted that a resolution through the UNSC was desirable but not the only available option, as some Serbian leaders are asserting. He also said that Washington did not believe that the new talks would be useful but agreed to participate in a new attempt to bring the debate to an end. Kosovo Minister Samardzic criticized the Ambassador for an "unseemly farewell" and for "meddling in its internal affairs." Samardzic said the Ambassador is "disappointed" that his host country "has not lost 15% of its territory."

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

¶7. (U) Russia: Reuters reported that Russian President Putin said on July 27 "the people of Serbia are defending their sovereignty and territorial integrity" over Kosovo and that European peace and stability are only possible by "taking into account the fundamental principles of international law."

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Kostunica used the last week before Serbia enters the doldrums of August to declare victory that there will be no new UNSC resolution and that a vast majority of parliament committed itself to his Kosovo policy. Belgrade will now wait for the Contact

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Group to produce a structure and will then decide, based on the stipulations made in the parliamentary resolution (no deadlines, no Ahtisaari, and under UNSC auspices), how (or if) to engage. End Comment.

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